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ABSTRACT

One of the most common worries children's parents have is how well their children are learning to read. Introducing children to the joys of reading depends not only on the teachers, but on the parents. The most effective way parents can teach children how to read and to love reading is to read to them and, later, with them. Jim Trelease, author of the best-selling "Read-Aloud Handbook," reported that teachers who read aloud to the class had a significantly higher rate of avid readers than those who did not. Teachers should also encourage self-expression in students' writing assignments, not perfection. Trelease states that instead of concentrating only on teaching children how to read, they should be taught to want to read. Parents should read to their children at least 20 minutes every day, to promote daily reading as a habit and part of a healthy lifestyle. (CR)

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Twenty Minutes A Day Keeps Illiteracy Away

By Cynthia Walsh

December 1, 1995

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"They drew a circle
that shut me out,

Heretic, rebel,
a thing to flout,

But love and I
had wit to win,

We drew a circle
that took them in."
Edwin Markham

What are the only products that don't seek to coerce children, directly or indirectly to buy something? To my knowledge, in our society, it is books. Yet they are fondled less by children's young hands than an umbrella on a rainy day. What once use to be a generation of readers is now a generation of T.V. watchers. My grandmother is eighty-five years old and reads part of the newspaper every day. She did not grow up in front of a image slicing box. Instead, she grew up amongst ivory pages and black ink. Her footprints, now smudged by technology, have long been left empty for generations to fall into. I was lucky, my mother read to me as a child, then read with me as I got older. I was taught to enjoy, respect, and honor books. Excursions to the library were sought after and consistent. But what about today's children? Are they being read to? Is the local library a home away from home, or a building that stands lifeless? This paper is my humble attempt to briefly review the literature on the importance of reading aloud to your children.

One of the most common worry a parent has is how well their child is learning to read. In fact, it is probably the most questioned subject in a first graders career as a learner. For example, parents often ask, "Will my son or daughter be able to read by the end of first grade?" or "Are my children receiving a teaching method that really works?". Ultimately, turning a child on to the joys of reading depends not only on the teachers, but more importantly, on the parents. Also, a balanced approach, one consisting of looking at words in context and learning letter sound relationships, seems to be the most influential in achieving literacy.

Jim Trelease, author of the best selling Read-Aloud Handbook, reported that teachers who read aloud to the class had a significantly higher rate of avid readers compared to teachers who did not read aloud. Also, the more the kids read, the more they learned how to figure out unfamiliar words by using surrounding context. But in order to do this, teachers must provide a safe, nurturing atmosphere for their new readers. They should encourage self-expression in their student's writing assignments, not perfection. Too often children get turned off by reading and writing because we, parents and teachers, are so quick to critique. The "red pen marks" of phonics and grammar end up covering the invented spellings and creativity of a young students first attempt at literacy. Jim Trelease states, "We have concentrated so hard on teaching children <u>how</u> to read, that we have forgotten to teach them to <u>want</u> to read. As a result, we have created a nation of schooltime readers,

not lifetime readers."

Why is it, as parents, as humans, we find time to wash the dishes, talk on the phone, watch a game on the television or do the laundry, yet we cannot find twenty minutes to read to our children each night? Reading to your children is the most effective way to help him or her learn how to read and how to love reading. Reading aloud helps children build vocabulary, lesson anxiety, increase attention spans, encourage creativity, identify emotions and promote the expansion of learning. As well as offering a nurturing time for both parent and child. The rhythm of your voice and the warmth of your body help your child associate reading with pleasure(LaForge 163).

Organizations such as, The Parents and Kids Reading Together Workshop, The Association of Booksellers for Children, and the Read to Me campaign have provided workshops, videos, books, and pamphlets for parents to take the necessary steps towards reading to their children at least twenty minutes every day. Also, these organizations enlist pediatricians to promote daily reading as part of a healthy lifestyle. They want children to incorporate reading into their daily routine like brushing their teeth, eating good foods, and exercising are promoted.

Reading has always been vital to my existence as a happy, healthy, and complete individual. When I want to be romanced I choose Danielle Steel. When I want to be scared I choose Steven King. And when I want to be enriched I choose Jeanne Gibbs. What I do not choose, is not to read. Reading is the

most important gift you can yourself. Unwrap it, and explore the world of prosperity. I would like to end my paper with a bold claim that Trelease made in one of his many lectures on the importance of reading to your children. It goes as follows: "The more you read, the more you know. The more you know, the smarter you grow. The smarter you grow, the longer you stay in school. The longer you stay in school, the more money you earn. The more you earn, the better your children will do in school, and the longer you will live. So if you hook a child with reading, you influence not only his future health and financial circumstances but also those of the next generation! On the other hand, the less you read, the less you know. The less you know, the sooner you drop out of school. The sooner you drop out, the more likely you are to be poor, and the greater your chances of going to jail. Eighty-two percent of prison inmates are school dropouts, and 60 percent are illiterate." Make a difference, read to your children!

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